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Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays his respects to Lata's mortal remains at her funeral pyre in Shivaji Park, Mumbai | PTI

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LATA MANGESHKAR•SEPTEMBER 28, 1929•FEBRUARY 6, 2022

VOICE OF INDIA IN EVERY SENSE

The Nightingale cremated with full state honours late in the evening, brother lights pyre; two-day mourning announced

SHILAJIT MITRA

IT all began with a haunting. Nobody expected *Mahal* (1949), often dubbed the first horror film of Bollywood, to be a massive hit. And nobody anticipated *Aayega Aanewala*, the film's mournful melodic centrepiece, to do what it did. Lata Mangeshkar, then 20, understandably nervous, had a strange task. She had to begin the song from a corner of the room, and then, approaching the microphone, lodge its refrain. Timing was everything.

This story reverberates, much like its containing song, throughout Lata's career. She was a master of timing and tone, and myriad technical inventions bolstered her seemingly effortless voice. Or they did until now. The renowned singer and legend, a beacon of Indian film music the world over, and natively its queen, passed away on Sunday, after a sustained battle with Covid-19 in Mumbai. She was 92.

The end came at 8.12 am in Mumbai's Breach Candy hospital following multiple organ failure. Her brother Hridyanath Mangeshkar lit the funeral pyre at Shivaji Park late in the evening.

Lata was born to music and the stage. Her father, Pandit Deenanath Mangeshkar, was a classical vocalist and theatre actor. He had five children: Lata, Meena, Asha, Usha and Hridaynath. Lata, the eldest, began by acting in her father's plays. But his early demise brought her to the world of films. She acted in four Marathi films, one of which, *Gajabhau*, had her first Hindi song, *Hindustan Ke Logon*.

One of Lata's early champions was Ghulam Haider. Under his mentorship and the break of *Aayega Aanewala*, she found her footing in the 50s Hindi cinema. For the next four decades, Lata redefined Indian playback singing, elevating its credentials amid the strictures of classical traditions. Her peerless vocal range, deep musical knowledge, and unblemished singing style — varyingly described as sweet, pure and ageless — brought her fame. She recorded thousands of songs in Indian and foreign languages.

There were the romantic odes (*Jab Pyar Kiya To Darna Kya, Pyaar Hua Ikrar Hua, Ajeeb Dastan Hai Yeh*), the sad favourites (*Ek Pyaar Ka Nagma Hai, Raina Beeti Jaye*), the patriotic hits (*Aye Mere Watan Ke Logon*), the timeless duets (*Tum Aa Gaye Ho, Tere Bina Zindagi Se Koi* — Kishore; *'e Mohabbat Unse Milne Ka Bahana, Kali Ghata Ghir Aye Re* — Rafi; *O Mere Sanam, Ichak Dana Beechak Dana* — Mukesh) and countless *bhajans, aartis*, and *ghazals*. Where do you begin? Where do you end?

In a tribute to Lata, it would be remiss to leave out the composers, Shankar-Jaikishan and Laxmikant-Pyarelal being her sternest constants. Equally irreplaceable, though, are the actors who inhabited her voice: Nimmi, Madhubala, Meena Kumari, Nargis and later, everyone from Waheeda Rehman, Hema Malini and Jaya Bhaduri to Sridevi, Madhuri Dixit and Kajol.

> *Many have sung better than me, but perhaps they didn't get as much as I did. It is His kindness alone*
>
> **Lata Mangeshkar in all humility**

SOUMYADEEP SINHA

In the introduction to her 2009 book, *Lata Mangeshkar ...in Her Own Voice*, Nasreen Munni Kabir observed, "An interesting question to ask is whether Lataji is singing for the actress or the actress' performance is determined by Lataji."

Lata's formal accolades seem almost beside the point in the enormous context of her career. She won the National Film Award thrice, the Padma Bhushan, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, and, in 2001, the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award. Her expansive playback career was one half; she also exalted Indian film music on the international stage, composed soundtracks, produced films, released albums, founded hospitals and designed jewellery — all this while being one of the most reclusive and media-shy public figures of India.

Last year, on the occasion of her 92nd birthday, Lata gave one of her last interviews to journalist Subhash K Jha. She said she intends to return to active singing soon, and that she condemned communal divisions in the country. She sounded clear-eyed about a world without her. "It will be the same," she said humbly, though unbelievably. No, Lata ji, it's not the same.

Flag at half-mast

The Tricolour will be flown at half-mast during the mourning as a mark of respect. She was in hospital since January 8 due to mild Covid, and later pneumonia

INSIDE

LETTING LATA GO, SEEKING SOLACE IN HER SONGS | P8

MELODY QUEEN, DEVOUT PURIST | P9

SHE WAS THE SOUL OF INDIA'S MUSIC | P14

She leaves a void that cannot be filled. The coming generations will remember her as a stalwart of Indian culture, whose melodious voice had an unparalleled ability to mesmerise people

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Her heart touching voice and a life of struggle will always be an inspiration for generations

Sonia Gandhi, Congress president

Through her songs, she made an immense contribution to India's cultural integration

Dr Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister

The voice of a million centuries has left us. Her voice resounds now in the Heavens

Amitabh Bachchan, actor

She'll always continue to live in our hearts through her music

Sachin Tendulkar, cricketer

She was part of a soul, a consciousness of Indianness. This void is going to remain forever

A R Rahman, music composer

PUNJAB POLLS

Channi is the chosen one; Sidhu misses CM bus

HARPREET BAJWA @Chandigarh

IT is official: Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi is the party's chief ministerial face for the upcoming Assembly elections. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday made the announcement hoping to consolidate Dalit votes in favour of the party as they constitute 32% of the population in the state.

Addressing a virtual rally in Ludhiana, Rahul Gandhi said, "It was a difficult decision, but the people of Punjab made it easy as they wanted a CM who comes from a poor family. It is the decision of Punjab. He (Channi) is from a poor family. He understands poverty and knows it deeply. And in his heart and blood there is Punjab."

The big loss, of course, is for Navjot Singh Sidhu, Punjab Congress president who had triggered the upheaval in the state unit hoping to become the chief minister. After Rahul's announcement, Channi touched Sidhu's feet seeking his blessings. He said, "I thank everyone. This is a big battle which I can't fight alone. I don't have the money, courage to fight it. The people of Punjab will fight this battle"

Earlier, Sidhu said that he was never after any post, though he added he does not want to remain a *darshani ghora* (showpiece). "It is a moment of change, Inqilab, one which can better the lives of people. We don't need anything, we only need Punjab's welfare. My love for Punjab always wanted its betterment," he added. P10

DJ held for assaulting guest who requested Kannada song

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

A disc jockey (DJ) allegedly assaulted a person for requesting to play Kannada songs at a pub in Koramangala late on Saturday night. The police have booked a case and arrested the DJ, who claimed the incident had nothing to do with language and he assaulted the customer for hurling filthy abuses.

The alleged incident took place at Badmaash, a pub located in Koramangala. Sumitha and her cousins had gone to the pub to celebrate one of their birthdays. Sumitha told reporters that her cousins requested the DJ, Siddarth Mehrotra, to play a Kannada song. He told them he would play the song, but did not.

"At 12.30 am, the DJ stopped the music. When my cousin asked the DJ why he didn't play the Kannada song, he behaved rudely with us, told us we should not come to such places and asked us to get out. When my cousins objected to his behaviour, he held one of my cousins by the collar and assaulted him. He was stopped by the staff," Sumitha alleged.

Following the incident, Kannada activists protested in front of the pub at Sunday noon and took the pub manager, Dominic, to task. Dominic, who apologised for the incident, said usually they play Kannada songs, but there was a problem on Saturday night. "From now on, we will ensure that DJs play Kannada songs. I sincerely apologise for yesterday's (Saturday's) incident," he said.

CONTINUED ON: P5

EXPRESS READ

5 of family murdered in Mandya dist

MYSURU: A woman and four children were found murdered at KRS village, near KRS dam, in Mandya district on Sunday morning. Lakshmi (32), her children Raj (12), Komal (7) and Kunal (4), and Govinda (8), the son of a relative, were lying in a pool of blood at their home. The local police suspect it to be a case of murder for gain | P5

Govt can deal with any global devpt: FM

NEW DELHI: India is prepared to deal with any situation arising out of global developments, including the US Federal Reserve's decision to roll back monetary easing, and will not allow the country's economy to suffer, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman asserted on Sunday.

NATIONWIDE	FEBS	JAN 6
Fresh cases	1,39,923	1,01,474
Recoveries	2,50,184	2,11,246
Deaths	1,059	865
KARNATAKA	**FEBS**	**JAN 6**
Fresh cases	12,009	8,425
Recoveries	25,854	19,800
Deaths	50	42

Lumpens beware! Girls to get self-defence skills

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

GIRL students of all schools and colleges in the state will soon be given training in self-defence, announced CM Basavaraj Bommai here on Sunday.

Launching the "Obavva Art of Self Defence Training" for girl students studying in boarding schools run by the Social Welfare Department, at an event organised in Vidhana Soudha, Bommai said over 50,000 girl students staying at Backward Classes and Social Welfare Department hostels will be trained in self-defence in the first phase. He instructed the Home Department to use Police Training Schools to train women in self-defence.

"Many laws have been passed, programmes formulated and funds released to prevent atrocities against women. But there is a need to train them in self-defence too. Rogue elements can be taught a lesson if they have self-defence skills," he said. P4

Girl students display their martial arts and self-defence skills at the launch of the Obavva Art of Self Defence Training programme at Vidhana Soudha on Sunday | KAGADATA GADEKAL

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